

Washington, DC – Today, Congressman Charles A. Gonzalez (TX-20) issued the following statement following President Obama's address to the Joint Session of Congress on Health Reform:

"President Obama's address this evening to the Joint Session of Congress comes at a time when millions of families across the nation are facing skyrocketing health costs and insufficient access to affordable care.

"The status quo is simply not cutting it. Families are struggling to afford ever-increasing costs of premiums, pre-existing conditions are keeping some from accessing insurance coverage altogether, and inequalities in the current system are turning away those in need. It's crucial that we provide health care choices based on affordability and accessibility for all. It is a moral and economic imperative that we address this situation with force, not with simple tweaking of a system that is woefully broken.

"Our nation has over 45 million uninsured men, women, and children who do not have even the most basic healthcare services. However, we must remember that reform will not only benefit the uninsured. Those of us with insurance are also affected by our broken system. Premiums have doubled this decade, out of pocket costs for those with insurance have increased by 32%, and those with insurance pay \$1,100 annually in hidden costs to cover care provided to the uninsured. A staggering 62% of bankruptcies are due to medical bills. And sadly, 78% of people with a medically related bankruptcy had health insurance. We can all agree the status quo is not acceptable. We want people to keep their coverage and improve on what they have in price and coverage.

“Regardless how you view the legislation under consideration, I think we can all agree that skyrocketing health costs, insufficient access to affordable care for millions, and inefficiencies in the system are unsustainable. We simply cannot afford to wait any longer for real reform. As the President commented tonight, by doing nothing our deficit will grow, more families will go bankrupt, more businesses will close, more Americans will lose their coverage when they are sick and need it most, and more will die as a result. President Obama's address made it clear--the time to act on health care reform is now. We cannot risk one more mother, father, or child falling victim of the current system.”